

APPALACHIAN TRAIL MAINTAINERS COMMITTEE  
SMOKY MOUNTAINS HIKING CLUB



January 2019

**No First Saturday Work Trip in January**

As always, there is no scheduled first Saturday work trip in January. Happy 2019 to everyone!

**Chainsaw Certification Class**

Todd Sharkey, Natural Resource Specialist of the Nantahala National Forest Service, Cheoah/Tusquitee Ranger District is organizing a chainsaw certification/recertification class in the Cheoah Ranger District on February 23, 2019 (and 24<sup>th</sup> if a second day is needed for field evaluations). He can accommodate a maximum class size of 20 people. First priority will be for those folks whose Sawyer cards will expire in 2019, second priority is new Sawyers wanting certification, third priority will be all others who expire after 2019. Please do not attempt to qualify if you are not comfortable handling a chainsaw or if you do not have any prior experience. Current 1<sup>st</sup> aid and CPR will be required prior to the class. Please respond to [todd.sharkey@usda.gov](mailto:todd.sharkey@usda.gov), 828-837-5152 x118, by January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 if you are interested.

**Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee**

**Meeting**

There will be a meeting of the ATMC on **Wednesday January 16 at 6:30pm** at TNBank, 1311 W Lamar Alexander Pkwy, Maryville, TN 37801. We will be discussing the Spence privy project plans, National Trails Day, (Saturday June 1, 2019), Volunteer Recruitment, Mulch Operations, and other topics. If you have an item that you would like placed on the Agenda, please contact George Ritter at [rittergeo@gmail.com](mailto:rittergeo@gmail.com), or Diane Petrilla at [petrillad@gmail.com](mailto:petrillad@gmail.com).

**Welcome Stephen Eren, new ATC Trail Facilities Manager for the Smokies!**

We are very pleased to welcome Stephen Eren the new Trail Facilities Manager for the Smokies, who replaces Javier Salazar. Stephen, 29, is a native of Durham, NC and a 2011 graduate of Virginia Tech, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Conservation and Recreation Management and minored in Forestry. He also earned the rank of Eagle Scout with Boy Scouts of America. During his college summers, he took a National Outdoor Leadership School course and worked for the US Forest Service as a Wilderness Ranger intern in the Sierra National Forest. After graduation, he worked as a Wilderness Ranger all over Cherokee National Forest with the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS). Stephen alternated summers in the mountains with winters in the frozen North, working as a guide and dog handler at sled dog kennels in Maine, Vermont and the Upper Peninsula area of Michigan. In 2014, Stephen fulfilled his long-time and well-researched dream of hiking the entire Appalachian Trail. As Stephen and

**Thank you.....**

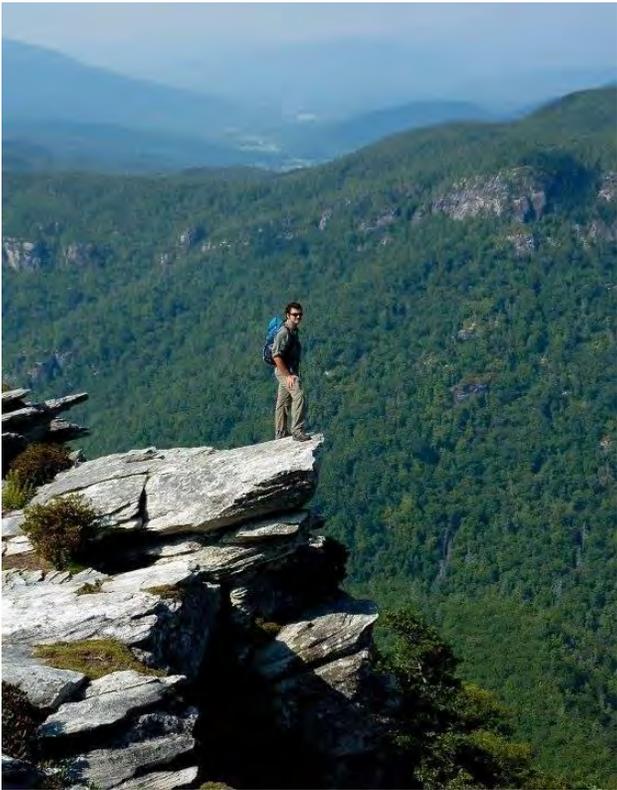
The SMHC Appalachian Trail Maintainer's Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the maintainers and NPS Backcountry Office staff who helped get winter tarps in place on shelters on the A.T. in the Park, as well as clean out privy bins just before the end of the "season." The folks who stepped up to do this are *greatly* appreciated and have helped us be prepared for 2019! ***Thank you again!***



any "thru hiker" will tell you, the trail is a magical place to experience the wilderness and community of people who genuinely love the outdoors. Stephen joined the inaugural Appalachian Trail Next Generation Advisory council and has continued on Next Gen to this day.

Most recently he completed a circumnavigation of the Delmarva Peninsula, on the East Coast, with the non-profit Upstream Alliance before returning to SAWS. For the past 3 years, Stephen has been working as the Lead Wilderness Ranger and Information Cabin Manager based out of the Linville Gorge.

In the last 2 months, Stephen married his best friend, bought a home with her, and started his dream job. Today, Stephen lives in Arden, North Carolina with his wife and their two retired sled dogs Max and Panda. Stephen is looking forward to providing value to as many of the heroic A.T. volunteers as he can! Welcome again Stephen, and we look forward to working with you!



*Stephen at Linville Gorge*

## **A. T. Work Trip Reports 10/1/2018 to 12/15/2018**

**11/22 - Paul Campbell, Ann Campbell - Chestnut Br Trail to Lower Mt Cammerer Tr** - Cleaned 84 waterbars, brushed trail.

**11/23 - Franklin LaFond, Crystal Thomas - Locust Cove Gap to Cheoah Bald** - Removed 7 blow downs between Locust Cove and Sassafras Shelter. Pruned a lot of woody vegetation 1 mile N. of Cheoah Bald. Filled mulch buckets at privy. Removed 10 pounds of trash from privy area. Removed limb debris between shelter and NOC, inspected trail conditions.

**11/25 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Newfound Gap** - Cleared brush from Newfound Gap to False Gap. In first three miles brush included one 6-inch diameter, 8-foot long log and two 4-inch diameter by 4-foot long logs. One tree with dual trunks of 5-inches and 4-inches were cut and the tree removed from the trail. About 0.5 mile NE of Dry Sluice Gap a 4-inch diameter tree fell into briars. The top of the tree broke so was easily removed but a ten-foot section of briars had to be cut away from the trail. About 1.5 miles NE of DSG, cut 6- inches from 12-inch diameter tree to clear it from the trail. 1.5 mile NE of DSG a full 4-inch diameter tree was in the trail. Removed tree after cutting some of its branches. When I arrived at the shelter, a man had started to carve initials into the upper sleeping area. One of the four hikers was also starting a fire even though the temperature was above 60-degrees. One of the initials carved was NB. I did not get the hikers names as they did not receive "Leave No Trace" information well. I also filled three mulch buckets and moved the active privy to bin #1 as bin #3 was over 95% full.

**12/6 - Ed Peck - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Removed blowdown approx.. 1 mi N of NFG.

**12/13 - Keith Mertz, Judy Wade - Fontana Dam to Route 28** - Trimmed back vegetation and briars. Removed three dead hemlocks and multiple branches from the trail. Hand sawed three fallen branches that had covered the trail.

## 2018 Appalachian Trail Maintainers Awards

The following awards were publicized and announced at the 2018 SMHC Annual Installation and Holiday banquet. This writer is constantly appreciative of the hard work so many volunteers do.

“SMHC trail maintainers work without any thought of compensation and, as the ATC notes in their recognition program, “...some very dedicated volunteers reject the thought of formal recognition for their efforts.” But the number of volunteers and their total hours are so impressive as to warrant special recognition by those who hike the trail and use the shelters. Here is a list of our SMHC maintainers who achieved special levels of performance.”

<New awards are underlined; asterisks indicate awards in prior years; bold indicates they did it again this year.>

### SMHC Awards – Hours for One Year Ending 9/30/18

**Platinum Pulaski (200 hours):** Pete Berntsen\*, Don Dunning\*, Edward Fleming\*, Phyllis Henry\* Tom Howard\*, **Franklin LaFond\***, Mac McNutt\*, Ed Peck\* Steve Reagan\*, **Janet Snyder\***, **Mark Snyder\***, Stew Taylor\*

**Gold Pulaski (100 hours):** Tony Bolt\*, Greg Crandall\*, Lynn DiFiore\*, **Steve Dunkin\*** Nancy Dunning\*, Steven Epps\*, Pamela Fleming\*, James Fondren\*, David S. Gray\*, Billy Heaton\*, Pete James\*, Dick Ketelle\* Keith Mertz\*, Ed Owens\*, Diane Petrilla “Hopeful” Powell\*, Pam Reddoch\* Philip Royer\*, Brian Schloff\*, Jimmy Smith\*, Neil Snapp, Janet Snyder\*, Mark Snyder\*, Jerry Troxler\*, Taylor Weatherbee, Wayne Williams\*, Mike Wood\*

**Silver Pulaski (50 hours):** Amanda Beal, **Nancy Dunning\***, **Ed Fleming\***, **John Gassler\***, **Dick Ketelle\***, **Keith Mertz\***, **Randy Mitchell\***, Wayne Powell, **Russ Redden\***, **Cindy Spangler\***, **Stew Taylor\***, **Jerry Troxler\***, **Bob Williams\***, Ruann Wood. 38 maintainers previously earned this award.

**Bronze Pulaski (25 hours):** **Jack Bray\***, **Steven Epps\***, **James Fondren\***, **Patti Grady\***, **Mike Harrington\***, **Alec Holtzclaw\***, **Tom Howard\***, **Maury Hudson\***, Eric Keller, Kristi Knight, **Fawn Landrum\***, **Peter Landrum\***, **Ed Owens\***, **Ben Palermo\***, **Bob Palermo\***, “**Hopeful**” **Powell\***, **Philip Royer\***, **Paul Ruble\***, **Tim Ryan\***, **Mark Shipley\***. 73 maintainers previously earned this award.

## ATC Awards – Hours since 10/1/2000 (Start of the Database)

**ATC Vest (1000 hours):** SPECIAL RECOGNITION is greatly deserved by our maintainers who have provided the greatest and longest commitments over the history of our AT involvement. We greatly appreciate the contribution of these 1000-hour maintainers: Pete Berntsen\*, Don Dunning\*, Ed Fleming\*, James Fondren\*, Dennis Fulcher\*, Jim Goddard\*, Doris Gove\*, Phyllis Henry\*, Steve Higdon\*, Tom Howard\*, Pete James\*, Bill Kerr\*, Dick Ketelle\*, Franklin LaFond\*, Mac McNutt\*, Lou Murray\*, Ed Peck\*, Randy Puckett\*, Steve Reagan\*, Philip Royer\*, Stew Taylor\*, Jerry Troxler\*, Wayne Williams\*

**ATC Cap (500 hours):** Jack Bray\*, Alan Duff\*, Nancy Dunning\*, Ann Farrar\*, Keith Mertz\*, “Hopeful” Powell\*, Jim Quick\*, Randy Rainey\*, Pam Reddoch\*, Paul Ruble\*, Janet Snyder\*, Mark Snyder\*, Bob Williams\*, Mike Wood\*

**ATC Patch (100 hours) :** Barbara Allen, Amanda Beal, Ben Palermo, Wayne Powell, Matt Richardson, Neil Snapp. 126 maintainers previously earned this award.

**ATPO Awards (250 hours since eligibility date):** Maintainers who have become eligible are contacted individually to choose whether they want this Pass. 31 of our maintainers have earned this pass, many of them more than once or twice.

### Some ATMC Accomplishments in 2018

For the year ending 9/30/18, 232 maintainers worked a total of 7656 hours to care for 101.9 miles of A.T. between Davenport Gap, TN and Wesser, NC. These numbers include work with 7 different visiting volunteer groups, contributing over 1100 hours. On June 2, 2018, we held another successful National Trails Day event, with 11 crews of 6-8 people working hard on different sections of the A.T. in the Park, followed by a wonderful picnic at Greenbrier. Excellent leadership was provided by Don and Nancy Dunning, Cindy Spangler, Pete Berntsen, Steve Dunkin, Philip Royer, Karen Brackett, Ed Fleming and Tim Bigelow. In July, four maintainers, Steve Dunkin, Amanda Beal, Neil Snapp and Ruann Wood undertook a complete A.T.

shelter survey in the Park; Neil completed the work in October. Their data will be collated and used to plan for future repairs and projects for the shelters. A huge endeavor this year has been transitioning Mulch Operations to a new “model” with the retirement of Don Dunning. We were very fortunate to recruit Philip Clarkson, who works for the NPS in trail management, to head up Mulch Operations, and have been recruiting teams of folks to carry mulch to the hike-able shelters in the Park. We also hope to re-establish a regular schedule of help with the equestrian clubs in the area. The replacement of the privy at Spence was delayed by helicopter availability until Spring (hopefully). Another formidable project just accomplished in late October (and technically counted in next year’s report) was the replacement of the Davenport Gap Shelter roof, under the expert leadership of Ed Fleming, and with help of 19 other maintainers, including a group of enthusiastic college students from Virginia Tech. Looking ahead, fostering relationships with a diversity of volunteer groups, young people, and others who are our future maintainers has become a priority, as our existing strong and dedicated maintainer core ages. This is a challenge faced by all 31 maintaining Clubs along the A.T., as we learned at the Volunteer Leadership Conference in August, at the National Conservation Training Center. Come along and maintain with us! And our deepest appreciation goes out to all who worked last year and continue to work so hard on the Appalachian Trail.



Please send any items of interest, **photos**, and event notifications for the ATMC Newsletter to Diane Petrilla at [petrillad@gmail.com](mailto:petrillad@gmail.com). Thank you for **ALL** of the work you do!

*Never a bad season to hike in the Smokies! Enjoy the season....  
(photos courtesy of Michael Zelinski)*